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PAINTING WILD FLOWERS.

VII.

WE are so accustomed to see the great laurel (*Rhododendron maximus*) growing as a cultivated shrub in our parks, that a locality where all the wild woods and byways are gay with its large clusters of pink and white blossoms seems like dreamland. The dark lance-oblong evergreen leaves of the rhododendron give it a tropical appearance; but it belongs to the North rather than the South; it appears in great profusion in some places, and then disappears, altogether, for a great many miles, perhaps; although it would be difficult to account for the conditions that had influenced its choice.

A study of rhododendron should be large, especially high, if it is to present the flowers at all as they appear when growing. At a recent exhibition in New York, there were some branches of rhododendron inclining from a blue vase and accepting the limits of a horizontal panel. Although the study was excellent in technique, its tone was directly opposed to the effects which the flowers produce under natural conditions; every cluster was full blown and entirely white—blue white, severely in keeping with the vase. While the heavy clusters are held in compact buds, they show the deepest rose tint wherever a pale green calyx allows a corolla to come to the light; and, in the next stage, the buds are all ready to unfold, and the rose tint is lighter. As they open, they pale more and more, losing all their blush before they are quite gone by. If every degree of development is represented, we have a more varied and pleasing effect. The green tinting in the throat of the corolla, and the yellowish and purplish spots that sometimes appear on the inner side of the largest lobe, must not be neglected, any more than the stamens and pistil. The magnificent leaves must not be allowed to assert themselves in too positive a manner; some may be thrown partly behind the flower clusters, others involved in shade, and others still may have lights that bring the dark greens nearer to the background tones—gray and olive should prevail in the background. If rich floral decorations are wanted for a large threefold screen, rhododendrons will be found very desirable for the centre, with branches from the two flowering trees next noticed for the side folds.

The common horse-chestnut (*Æsculus Hippocastanum*) produces, in early summer, dense panicles of delicately tinted flowers which, with the grand digitate leaves, make beautiful decorative designs. For a screen, one or two branches should extend obliquely from one side, and toward the light; the flowers and leaves being mostly near the ends, will throw their shadows upon the more naked part of the branches. The background should be rather warm and sunny, introducing tones that we would get in open woods, under an evening sky. The white for the flowers should be made very cream like—Naples yellow and yellow ochre, with the umbers and Siennas in the shadows. Where the pretty tinting of orange and purple shows in a flower, deep cadmium, French ultramarine and rose madder may be used. The lights and shadows that distribute themselves among the individual flowers must be recognized sufficiently to bring out characteristic forms; but it is those that affect the appearance of the cluster, as a whole, that are most important. If the dark green leaves seem too overwhelming, some may be carefully taken off; but it is best to retain all that can be managed to advantage, and the more receding ones may be put in with neutral effects that help to throw out stronger parts. Some of our indigenous horse-chestnuts or buckeyes, that are confined to the Southern and Western States, show more decided colors—yellow and red.

Our tall native locusts (*Robinia Pseudacacia*) fill the early summer air with sweet perfume when they throw out their long loose racemes of delicate white flowers, which are not unlike wistaria in form, belonging to the same family. The symmetrical compound leaves are of the tenderest greens, and they want a background of a lower tone than that recommended for the horse-chestnut; but the flowers may be treated very much the same as to the general scheme. The branches have numerous sharp thorns which, like other thorns, should be carried out as they occur, instead of being added last.

Pink and deep rose-colored locusts (*R. viscosa* and *R. hispida*) may be found growing wild in the Southern States, and are extensively cultivated in the North—without, however, attaining the height that they do in their native soil. These are very desirable for single screens; they show beautifully upon black satin.

The wild lupine (*L. perennis*), with its long slender

spikes of purplish flowers and its delicate palmate leaves, is one of the prettiest woodland flowers to be found in early summer. Water-colors suit the nicety of its structure better than oils, and single sprays show to better advantage than masses. Rose madder and new blue will give the local color of the flowers; the leaves want the zinober greens, raw Sienna and charcoal gray; their numerous leaflets must be laid in with some precision. For marginal decorations, lupine can be made particularly pleasing.

There are few wild flowers that have been painted so much as our common ox-eyed daisy (*Chrysanthemum Leucanthemum*); but alas! not always so as to remind us of summer breezes and sweet pastures. The white rays are often placed around the golden disk in a stellated style, or else, not radiating from the true centre, they are whorled. It is easier to control a brush so as to give the true direction of the rays, as well as their perfect curve, if it is carried from the tips toward the centre. It must be observed that the disk is never flat; but, being a little parterre of itself, it rises in a soft broad line between the centre and margin, both of these being compressed and holding shadow. Only a small proportion of the flowers should present themselves full face, and a very few should reach, respectively, well above and to one side of the principal mass. The leaves must be encouraged to make what show they will, and if stems seem too numerous, they must be partly wrapped in shadow. Oils are usually preferred for daisies. If finished studies are made in water-colors on white paper, tinting of any kind around the white rays is rather tedious.

Our common larger blue flag (*Iris versicolor*) is not an easy flower to paint. It is peculiar in form and texture, and requires a facile brush. The three erect petals, which form themselves into a sort of crane-like balloon, are of a pretty decided mauve; they may or may not allow a glimpse of the purplish petaloid stigmas. The three large spatulate sepals, which look like petals turning downward, want the mauve mixed with rose madder for the general tint; they are mottled with deeper purple—deep carmine and French ultramarine—and each centre is marked with a fluffy sort of stripe that wants very light touches of cadmium. The satin-like bracts enfolding the base of the flower should have very thin color—yellow ochre, blue black and Naples yellow—the same being carried down into the green of the stems. A flower that has had its day shows a little crumpled mass of purple at the top of these bracts; such should not be omitted—they are characteristic, and not without value. The long leaves, sheathing at the base, may be brought around to form curves or angles, as may be desired; they will also assist in carrying out the scheme of light and shade.

In the same low ground where the blue flags grow, we often see the golden ragwort (*Senecio aureus*), the two mingling their complementary colors and producing the most striking effect. If we combine flowers at all, it should be in accordance with the suggestions of nature. The golden ragwort consists of clusters of composite flowers that are easy to paint; cadmiums, umbers, and zinober greens will soon produce them.

Of the many buttercups that appear during the spring and summer, *Ranunculus fascicularis*, *R. Bulbosus*, and *R. Acris* are the most likely to be chosen for painting. Their striking brilliancy is not often secured—not because the colors are inadequate, but because they are not properly managed. The petals of the buttercup might be of the richest yellow, and yet they would not look like burnished fine gold, as they do, only that their texture is such that they catch the most brilliant lights, with corresponding gray tones and shadows; these must be respectively recognized and laid in, else, no matter how exact we may have been in matching the local color, we shall have none of the characteristic brilliancy of the buttercup. Cadmiums, chromes, and Indian yellow may all be used; and with them we want the most delicate grays—cobalt and madder lake will produce them by combining with the yellow tints. In water-colors one cannot be too careful about sparing the lights; and in oils, they must be as carefully laid on. If petals have fallen and left the little green heads partly or entirely bare, the more real the effect. The much divided leaves, which a good proportion of the species have, must be employed to advantage, to cover some of the stems that necessarily accumulate when a great many flowers are used. One of the prettiest ways of painting a good-sized study of buttercups is to leave them as they are naturally gathered by a covetous hand—a large bunch loosely bound with grasses and slightly inclined from the

shadow side toward the light, some standing briskly upright, others bent and nodding. Such a bunch will cast heavy shadows, against which the gold will shine out the brighter.

Prominent among early summer flowers that are desirable for decorative purposes, but which require no special directions for painting beyond what practice with preceding flowers will suggest, are the following: Clustered Solomon's seal (*Smilacina racemosa*), with its long curving stems of perfectly white, plume-like flowers; the painted cup (*Castilleja coccinea*), consisting of showy scarlet bracts holding an inconspicuous yellow flower; the blazing star (*Chamælirium luteum*), a very striking and rather rare flower, having a long, terminal spicate raceme of small, white flowers, with a whorl of large leaves at the base of the tall stem. This is particularly pretty thrown up over decorative landscape effects; even if several plants are used, the large whorls of leaves will have ample scope in a foreground, while the single stems will shoot up without marring anything beyond, and allow the delicate flowers to droop over at the top.

H. C. GASKIN.

(To be continued.)

China Painting.

LETTERS TO A YOUNG LADY

WHO ASKS IF SHE CAN LEARN CHINA PAINTING.

VII.

IN my last letter I named a variety of colors that could be used on china in flower painting, and also the colors for shading them. It is hardly necessary, therefore, to recapitulate the shading for blue, pink or purple flowers. I must say this, however: in shading pink flowers there is a choice of using ivory black or apple green or emerald green with carmine. Try all three on the side of your plate, and use the tint you prefer.

In shading all flowers you will understand that the color of the flower must be mixed with the color for shading. Not with the palette knife under any circumstances, but always with the brush. Aim to have the brush quite clean, so that only the two colors—the flower tint and the shading color—are combined. It is desirable in china painting that all shadows be clear. You can easily spoil your whole work by a little wrong color in the combination. If the painting looks muddy before firing, you may be sure it will be muddy after.

If you have followed me in practice as I hope, and have succeeded as well as you deserve, by this time you are ready for some instruction in grounding or tinting. Perhaps I anticipated this knowledge on your part, in giving you designs for a set of plates in my sixth letter; but, in the simplicity of the coloring, I quite forgot your ignorance; yet I am sure those very designs, so suggestive and clear, have stimulated your ambition to experiment in this very field.

So we will begin with the grounding at once. You wrote you had no grounding oil; was it essential? And I answer, No. You have fat oil (essence grasse) and lavender oil; that will do. Take mixing yellow for the color; squeeze out of the tube on the glass palette (if perfectly clean) about three times as much as you ordinarily do. Also, one sixth as much flux. Drop one drop of fat oil and four or five of lavender oil on these (paint and flux), and rub them together with the palette knife. Mix them thoroughly and smoothly. When of right consistence, the paint should be thin enough to spread out of itself upon the palette. You will very soon understand how stiff it should be when you put it upon the china.

Now take a piece of very soft cotton half as large as an after-dinner coffee cup, a quarter of an old linen handkerchief to cover it, gathering the four corners together, and tying close to the bunch of cotton with a bit of thread.

You will understand that you have a pad in your hand. Try your experiment upon a plate or saucer or tile; but let me say here, china is invariably the best even for the beginner to experiment upon, and broken china, if you wish to fire your experiment, can be had for the asking at any china store.

With your largest brush perfectly clean, dipped slightly in turpentine, take up a good deal of color and lay on the plate rapidly; the direction of the strokes does not matter so long as the whole surface is evenly covered. Avoid passing over the same place twice unless just